

Members

Sen. Sue Landske, Chairperson
Sen. Brandt Hershman
Sen. Earline Rogers
Sen. Karen Tallian
Rep. Terri Austin
Rep. David Niezgodski
Rep. Ed Soliday
Rep. Donald Lehe



ILLIANA EXPRESSWAY PROPOSAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

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Authority: IC 8-23-27)

Legislative Services Agency
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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: September 23, 2009
Meeting Time: 10:00 A.M.
Meeting Place: Meeting room, Purdue Technology
Center, 9800 Connecticut Drive,
Crown Point, Indiana
Meeting City: Crown Point, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Sen. Sue Landske, Chairperson; Sen. Karen Tallian; Rep. Terri Austin; Rep. David Niezgodski; Rep. Ed Soliday; Rep. Donald Lehe.

Members Absent: Sen. Brandt Hershman; Sen. Earline Rogers.

Call to Order

Senator Sue Landske called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. She had the Committee members introduce themselves and then read the Committee's charge aloud. See IC 8-23-27-7.

Preliminary Remarks

The purpose of the meeting was to hear a presentation on the Illiana Expressway

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feasibility study, which the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) was charged by statute with conducting. See IC 8-23-27-14 and IC 8-23-27-15. INDOT subsequently contracted with Cambridge Systematics, Inc. to carry out the study.

Accordingly, Senator Landske asked **Chris Kiefer**, INDOT Legislative Director, to make introductory remarks.

Mr. Kiefer reviewed the statutory requirements for the study. He emphasized that the study is merely a feasibility study and not a NEPA study (National Environmental Protection Act). He stated that INDOT Planning reviewed the study and agrees with the methodology used by Cambridge Systematics.

Mr. Kiefer then made a few remarks on project funding. With initial costs ranging between approximately \$600 million (for a four-lane version) and \$1 billion (for an eight-lane version), Mr. Kiefer said that the project will probably have to look at imaginative ways to finance the expressway. These alternatives might include operating the expressway as a toll road or some type of public-private partnership.

Mr. Kiefer concluded by indicating the next step in the process would be to conduct an environmental study.

Senator Landske then asked **Leigh Morris**, Chairman of the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA) and a Deputy Commissioner at INDOT, to address the Committee. Mr. Morris said that he was not speaking in either of his official capacities, but rather as a citizen of northwest Indiana who is concerned with transportation. Mr. Morris invoked his background in health care to compare Indiana commerce with the human body. He said that transportation in northwest Indiana is like the throat. The health of the body, he elaborated, is dependent on the health of the throat, which is essential for proper nutrition and respiration of the body. Likewise, he said, the health of Indiana commerce depends on the health of transportation in northwest Indiana, and an Illiana Expressway is essential for the long-term health of transportation in northwest Indiana.

Mr. Morris also distributed but did not discuss Attachment 1, Future Illiana Expressway.

Feasibility Study

With these preliminary remarks concluded, Senator Landske then turned to **Barbara Sloan**, Principal, Cambridge Systematics, and asked her to begin her presentation on the Illiana Expressway Feasibility Study, which was performed by Cambridge Systematics. See Attachment 2 (Illiana Expressway Feasibility Study Legislative Committee Briefing) and Attachment 3 (Illiana Expressway Feasibility Study ('09 July 31), available at <http://www.in.gov/indot/2355.htm> under "Studies - Corridor").

Ms. Sloan's presentation (Attachment 2) addressed the following aspects of the Feasibility Study:

- the scope of the project;
- the study area;
- the public outreach done in the course of performing the study;
- the project purpose and need;

- environmental overview;
- alternative alignment corridors;
- corridor development;
- travel demand;
- socioeconomics;
- benefits and opportunities; and
- traffic and revenue analysis.

Several Commission members had questions. **Senator Karen Tallian** asked whether the northernmost corridor, Alignment Corridor 3 (AC3), would interfere with the current Indiana Toll Road lease, which contains a restriction about competing highways. Chris Kiefer (INDOT) responded that Alignment Corridor 3 would not fall within the definition of a competing highway because the definition uses a two-part test, one branch of which is whether the other highway is within ten miles of Indiana Toll Road. He said that Alignment Corridor 3 is more than ten miles from the Indiana Toll Road.

Representative Terri Austin wanted to know why the feasibility study only looked at highway construction and did not examine the introduction of other transportation modalities. Ms. Sloan said that her company, Cambridge Systematics, could look at alternative modalities but the feasibility study was conducted within the scope of the legislation, which only contemplates interstate quality highway construction between Interstate 57 in Illinois and Interstate 65 in Indiana.

Representative Don Lehe observed that the feasibility study mostly concentrates on the effects of an Illiana Expressway on Lake and Porter Counties. He asked whether there would be also be effects further south for traffic coming north and for existing toll roads. Ms. Sloan observed that there are analyses of the effects on the Borman Expressway (I-80/94) and US 30 in chapter 8 of the feasibility study. She reiterated that the feasibility study shows only a small improvement in the traffic carried by the Borman because as the traffic is relieved on the Borman by the Illiana Expressway, the freed capacity on the Borman is filled by local traffic that would otherwise avoid the Borman. She added that Cambridge Systematics could analyze other pairs of travel, but the number of possibilities would be endless.

Questions and Comments

At the conclusion of Ms. Sloan's presentation, Senator Landske opened the floor for questions and comments. A selection of these comments and questions follows.

Kitty Conley, reporter for the Crown Point Star, observed that there have been a number of serious accidents near Highway 231 and Interstate 65. Ms. Sloan noted that the number of crashes and crash severity were taken into account in the study. She added that any of the proposed alignment corridors would relieve the I-65 corridor by diverting traffic, especially trucks.

Representative Lehe asked about the southernmost corridor, Alignment Corridor 1 (AC1), specifically, how far south is too far south. Ms. Sloan said that they did not want to consider a corridor further south than Alignment Corridor 1 (AC1) because (in their model)

demand drops off quickly after that.

Bob Carter, Illinois, asked whether the Illiana Expressway will be built if the intermodal and the airport (Peotone) projects fail. Ms. Sloan said that the feasibility study did not take the intermodal into account at all and does not make the Illiana Expressway dependent on the airport project.

Lu Ann Franklin, reporter for The Times of Northwest Indiana, asked when the Expressway might be built at the earliest. Ms. Sloan said if everything were to go perfectly, construction could begin around 2017 and the Expressway could be in service by about 2031.

Representative Ed Soliday asked whether an extension of the Illiana Expressway east of I-65 could be justified financially. Ms. Sloan answered that Cambridge Systematics did not attempt to cost out any extensions. She said that they would have to fine tune the numbers based on a specific origin and destination. Chris Kiefer added that INDOT has no interest in any extension of the proposed Illiana Expressway. INDOT is looking only at the I-57 to I-65 segment, he said. Extensions, he added, would be a discussion for a later time.

John Swanson, Executive Director, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), made the following comments, which he illustrated with several large posterboard maps:

- NIRPC is concerned with how the proposed Illiana Expressway fits into total Chicago transportation system.
- Alignment Corridor 3 (AC3), the northernmost corridor, is in the way of an encroaching high growth area in Illinois.
- An extension of I-355 in Illinois is not likely because there is a community of high value homes at its southern terminus.
- More work needs to be done on the environmental side, in particular, analyzing the interaction with the flood plain of the Kankakee River.
- Issues of environmental justice should be considered; for example, whether this project would contribute to urban sprawl.
- He suggested the creation of:
 - a corridor planning council comprised of local public officials; and
 - a bi-state commission for the project.
- Finally, he warned not to underestimate the impact of freight in the planning processes.

Michael Puente, Chicago Public Radio, asked whether the feasibility study would have to be redone as time passes. Ms. Sloan said that NEPA studies are the ones with more of a shelf life. She added that the greater concern is corridor preservation.

Representative Austin asked about the impact of the feasibility study on property values. Ms. Sloan answered that this is just a feasibility study; corridor preservation cannot happen

at this stage. She added that corridor preservation would not affect property values. Chris Kiefer commented that in the case of the I-69 extension INDOT has had a 2000 foot corridor established since 2003. But in this case, there is no established corridor under a NEPA study. He also stressed that the corridors in the feasibility study are 3000 feet wide and the actual corridors will be on the order of 350 to 450 feet wide.

Senator Landske concluded by stating that the Committee's charge is to determine if the project should proceed and not to choose a particular corridor.

Adjournment

Senator Landske declared the meeting adjourned at 12:32 p.m.